I’ll take her absence upon any price,  
With any loss.
mosca     Madam –
lady would-be   I ha’ brought your patron  
A toy, a cap here, of mine own work –
mosca     ’Tis well. 15
I had forgot to tell you, I saw your knight,  
Where you’d little think it –
lady would-be   Where?
mosca     Marry,  
Where yet, if you make haste, you may appre’nd him,  
Rowing upon the water in a gondola,  
With the most cunning courtesan of Venice. 20
lady would-be   Is’t true?
mosca     Pursue ’em, and believe your eyes.  
Leave me to make your gift.  
[Exit Lady Would-be]  
I knew ’twould take.  
For lightly, they that use themselves most licence  
Are still most jealous.
vulpone    Mosca, hearty thanks  
For thy quick fiction, and delivery of me. 25
Now, to my hopes, what sayest thou?  
[Enter Lady Would-be]
lady would-be   But do you hear, sir? –
vulpone [aside]   Again! I fear a paroxysm.
lady would-be   Which way  
Rowed they together?
mosca     Toward the Rialto.  
lady would-be   I pray you lend me your dwarf.  
mosca     I pray you, take him.  
[Exit Lady Would-be]
Your hopes, sir, are like happy blossoms, fair,  
And promise timely fruit, if you will stay

But the maturing; keep you at your couch –
Corbaccio will arrive straight, with the will;  
When he is gone, I’ll tell you more.  
[Exit Mosca]
vulpone    My blood,  
My spirits are returned; I am alive; 35
And like your wanton gamester at primero,  
Whose thought had whispered to him ‘not go less’,  
Methinks I lie, and draw – for an encounter.  
[He hides in his bed]

Act III Scene VI

[Enter] Mosca [and] Bonario  
mosca     Sir, here concealed, you may hear all. But ’pray you  
Have patience, sir; (One knocks) the same’s your father  
knocks;  
I am compelled to leave you.  
bonario   Do so. Yet  
[Exit Mosca]  
Cannot my thought imagine this a truth.  
[He hides]

Act III Scene VII

[Enter] Mosca, Corvino [and] Celia  
mosca     Death on me! You are come too soon, what  
meant you?  
Did not I say I would send?
Act III Scene IV

Volpone stands to one side of the stage as Lady Would-be enters. This is the first time we have seen her and her opening words, addressing the servant Nano as _sir_, immediately suggest a lack of social awareness (or perhaps pave the way for III.v.29). What does Jonson reveal about her character as she talks to her maids? She then turns to Volpone, driving him to desperation with her non-stop conversation. What does it reveal about her as she moves from one subject to another?

2  _band_ collar. English visitors were generally shocked by the low necklines favoured by Venetian women, but Lady Would-be is eager to copy the style (see the illustration on page 288).

5–6  _dressed/Most favourably_ This is ironic; she is dissatisfied with her appearance.

7  _petulant things_ curls that won’t stay in place (see line 10), or, uncooperative maids.

8  _fever_ This is the _fit_ that he referred to in line 27 of the previous scene.

12  _You ha’ not washed your eyes yet_ aren’t you awake enough yet to see what’s wrong.

13  _do they not stand even i’ your head_ have you got a squint.

15  _Anon_ in a moment.

17  _tire_ head-dress.

19, 20  _forsooth_ Lady Would-be first says _forsooth_ in line 17. Here she says it twice more rather angrily, presumably because she is irritated by the way in which the Second Woman imitates her in line 18.

20  _Bird-eyed_ looking around nervously like a bird.

22  _by that light_ Lady Would-be swears by the light of day.

24  _muse_ wonder.

27  _fame_ reputation.

28–9  Lady Would-be claims that the knowledge of style she is imparting to her women is the equivalent of an _ample dowry_ (large financial marriage settlement).

32  _curious_ attentive to detail.

35  _imputation to_ slur on.

37  _fucus_ coloured paste used for make-up.

38  _give ’em entertainment_ look after them.

39  _Volp_ What does this way of addressing Volpone suggest?

41  _fury_ one of the avenging goddesses of Greek and Latin mythology.

43  _cleave_ split.

45–6  Volpone is horrified to realize that his desire to hint to Lady Would-be that he sees her as a kind of fury has simply given her the opportunity ( _occasion_ ) to torment him with an account of one of her own dreams.

47  _golden mediocrity_ the golden mean or balance between extremes that the Roman poet Horace calls _aurea mediocritas_. (Although the translation of _mediocritas_ by _mediocrity_ sounds awkward today, it was a normal use of the word at the time, but it is typical of Lady Would-be that she ostentatiously brings her learning into the conversation at every opportunity.)

51–61  Lady Would-be’s diagnosis of a heart-related disease ( _passion of the heart_ ) includes heartburn (formerly associated with the heart), irregular heartbeat and melancholy. What follows is a long list of cures: _Seed-pearl_ as a heart stimulant; _Tincture of gold_, another heart medicine (see Note on _aurum potabile_, I.iv.73); _coral_ worn to ward off melancholy; _elecampane root_ used as a tonic; _myrobalanes_, an astringent tropical fruit used to reduce fever; _Burnt silk_ used in treating smallpox (its inclusion suggests Lady Would-be is getting carried away); _amber_ or _ambergris_, a secretion of sperm whales, used to guard against infection and here perhaps to flavour bitter medicines; _muscatel_ wine in which to dissolve medicine; _saffron_ derived from the